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Commissioner

State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations
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Enclosure 4d
April 19, 2012

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TO: Members of the Board of Regents

FROM: Deborah A. Gist, Commissioner

RE: Renewal of the New England Laborers' / Cranston Public Schools Career and Construction Academy Charter School (NEL/CPS) by the Rhode Island Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education

The charter of the New England Laborers' / Cranston Public Schools Career and Construction Academy Charter School (NEL/CPS) expires at the conclusion of the 2011-12 school year. In accordance with the Board of Regents Regulations Governing Public Charter Schools C-4-3, the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) coordinated the process of evaluating the performance of NEL/CPS over the past five years to determine the merits of charter renewal.

Review Process

- Over the past two years, RIDE has developed a rigorous evaluation of charter-school performance, guided by three questions:
 - Is the school's educational program an academic success?
 - Is the school providing the appropriate conditions for academic success?
 - Is the school a viable organization?

Because the review was not complete at the time of analysis, NEL/CPS went through a targeted version of the full review.

The first portion of the review — is the school's educational program an academic success? — was designed to consider all relevant student outcome measures, including mathematics and ELA NECAP performance, IDEA SPP indicators, graduation rates, federal Adequate Yearly Progress designations, and, if applicable, ACCESS proficiency and graduation rates.

The second portion of the review – is the school providing the appropriate conditions for success? – was designed to gauge the quality of instructional leadership, instruction, and curriculum (mathematics and ELA only) at each school relative to the standards set forth in the Board of Regents Basic Education Program. Evidence for this portion of the review was gathered through a two-day site visit and, where applicable, the findings of 2010 Commissioner’s Review Process.

The third portion of the review – is the school a viable organization? – was designed to consider whether or not schools are using public funds responsibly and appropriately. RIDE staff reviewed each school’s financial audits over the course of the charter term, as well as other relevant documentation on the school’s compliance with statutory and regulatory requirements.

- The school was required to complete a renewal application. This application provides an opportunity for the school: (1) to present any important new or supplemental information pertaining to the above guiding questions, to enable a more comprehensive assessment of school performance; and (2) to articulate the school’s strategies and capacities for sustaining success and continuing to improve over the next charter term.

Key Findings

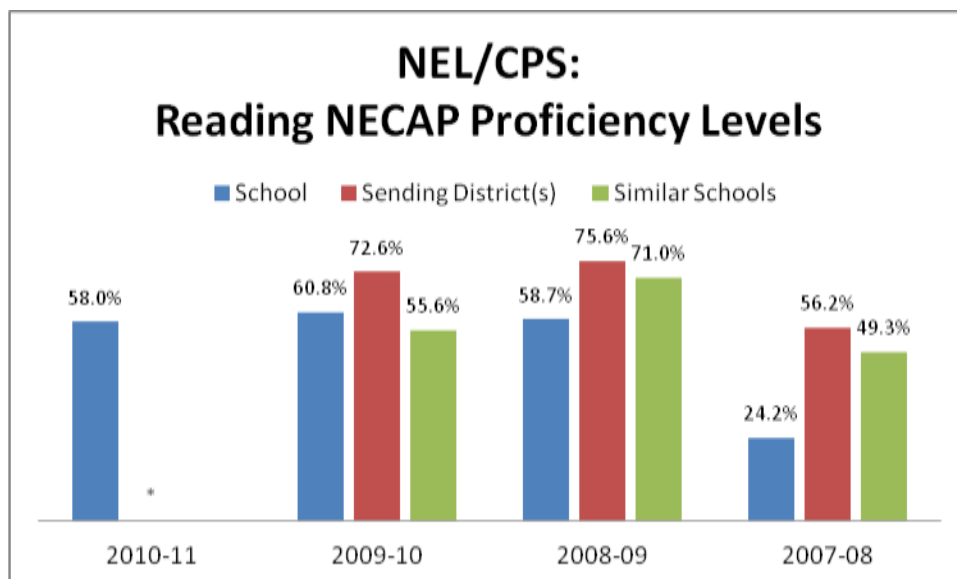
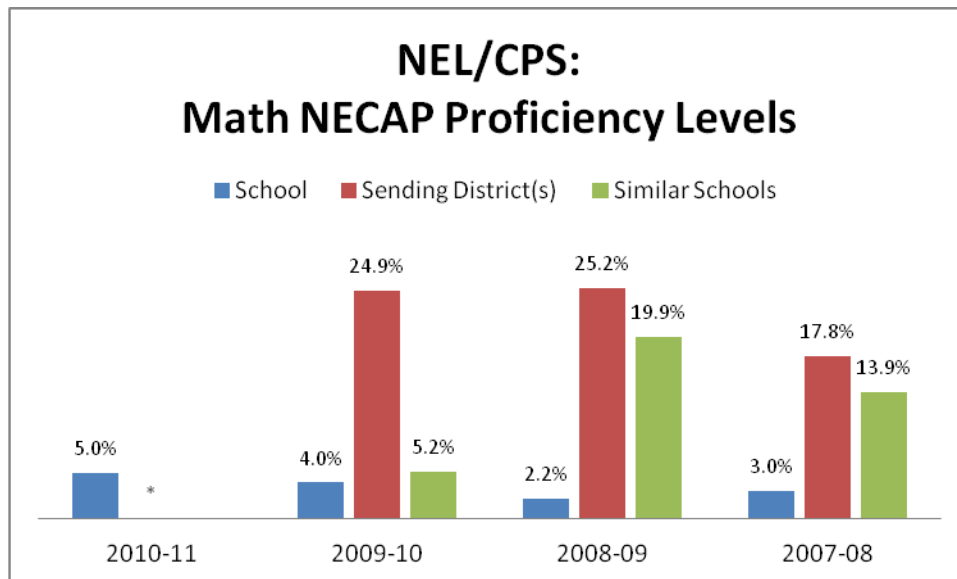
- The educational program at NEL/CPS is not an academic success. As measured by NECAP, the school’s ELA and mathematics programs have significantly underperformed the school’s sending districts in every year that data are available. With the exception of the 2009-10 teaching year, the school’s mathematics and ELA NECAP performance has also lagged significantly behind that of similar schools [See Attachment 1]. Since 2007-08, the school has been classified “Insufficient Progress” for failing to meet AYP requirements. It has missed multiple AYP targets for test participation, graduation rate, and NECAP proficiency.
- NEL/CPS is not providing many of the appropriate conditions for academic success. Our review indicates that the school does not have many of the internal systems and structures to measurably improve the achievement of its students:
 - Overall, the school’s administrative and board leadership for student learning and continuous improvement over the life of the school’s latest charter term does not meet the standards, as defined by the student academic goals in the Charter Performance Review Handbook; however, the school recently hired a new Executive Director to lead the school and has developed a new school-improvement plan to improve student achievement.

- At the time of the school's renewal site visit, NEL/CPS did not have complete ELA or mathematics curricula that were aligned with Rhode Island State Standards.
- At this time, we are not able to make a comprehensive assessment of the organization viability of NEL/CPS:
 - For the financial review, RIDE reviewed audit history for the charter term. NEL/CPS does not have separate year-end audited financial statements for any years in the most recent charter term. All financial information is aggregated into the Cranston Public Schools financial statements, as well as into the City of Cranston financial statements. However, the school is materially compliant with applicable statutory and regulatory obligations for which there was evidence. Moving forward, the charter school's financial statements will be independently audited separate from Cranston Public Schools.

THEREFORE, IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT the Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education renew the charter of NEL/CPS for a three (3)-year term, to operate in accordance with the renewed Charter from the 2012-13 school year to the 2014-15 school year. To be eligible for future charter renewal, the school must demonstrate overall success by:

- attaining student achievement goals, as defined in the Charter Performance Review Handbook. And,
- implementing standards-based curricula that meet the requirements of the Board of Regents Basic Education Program Regulations G-13-1. And,
- demonstrating the management and leadership necessary to establish a thriving, financially viable charter public school as defined by the organizational performance goals in the Charter Performance Review Handbook. And,
- ensuring that all operational elements of the school meet statutory and regulatory guidelines.

Attachment 1:



School = NEL/CPS Proficiency Levels

Sending District = A weighted average of a school's sending district(s)' proficiency levels. NEL/CPS draws students from multiple districts statewide.

Similar Schools = An estimate of the proficiency level of Rhode Island schools with similar numbers of ELL, SPED, and FRPL students as NEL/CPS.

*Comparative data is not yet available for the 2010-11 teaching year.

Student Performance Relative to Sending District and Similar Schools

NEL/CPS						
		2006-2007 TcY	2007-2008 TcY	2008-2009 TcY	2009-2010 TcY	2010-2011 TcY
Proficiency Level	Reading	N/A	23.50%	58.70%	57%	58%
	Math	N/A	2.90%	2.20%	4%	5%
1.1 Sending District	Reading	N/A	Below Typical	Below Typical	Below Typical	N/A
	Math	N/A	Below Typical	Below Typical	Below Typical	N/A
1.2 Similar Schools	Reading	N/A	Typical	Below Typical	Typical	N/A
	Math	N/A	Below Typical	Below Typical	Typical	N/A
1.5 AYP		N/A	Insufficient Progress	Insufficient Progress	Insufficient Progress	N/A